

Marshall Milling Company Complex: Capitola
Manufacturing Company Cotton Mill
South side of French Broad River
Marshall
Madison County
North Carolina

HAER No. NC-19C

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HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CAPITOLA MANUFACTURING COMPANY COTTON MILL

HAER No. 19-C

Location: South side of the French Broad River, across from the town of Marshall, Madison County, North Carolina

USGS Marshall Quadrangle Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.348000.3962320

Present Owner: Frank Coxe, Asheville, North Carolina

Present Occupant: Marshall Glove Factory

Present Use: Manufacture of gloves to be worn by industrial workers

Significance: Architecturally very simple, the cotton mill is historically significant because of the role it has played and continues to play in the economy of the town of Marshall. Since its establishment, it has been the only manufacturing company in the town.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Capitola Manufacturing Company was incorporated in 1903. In June of 1904, the company purchased the land on the west side of the south abutment of the county bridge next to the Marshall Milling Company. The mill began operation in 1904, employing approximately 200 people.

The mill was the subject of a 1907-1908 investigation of child labor practices by the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor.

In early 1907, Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana made a speech to the U.S. Senate pleading for a federal child labor law. The 3-day exhortation scathingly described the conditions under which children worked in mines, factories and sweat shops. This work, he alleged, kept them from the education they needed to truly improve their station in life. The day Senator Beveridge ended his speech, President Roosevelt signed a joint resolution of Congress directing the Secretary of Commerce and Labor to investigate and report on the physical condition of the women and children working in the United States.

Thomas Robinson Dawley, Jr., was hired as one of the investigators. His directive was to study the southern cotton mills, including Capitola Manufacturing Company. Dawley applauded the hiring of women and children in the cotton mills as an improvement over the very poor conditions under which they lived as mountain farmers.

However, the Commissioner of Labor shared the view of Senator Beveridge rather than that of Dawley. Dawley was relieved as an investigator and his conclusions were not included in the 19-volume government report.

Therefore, he wrote his own book so the public could understand the other side of the controversy.

"The rule laid down by the sociological theorist and the special interests supported by them, is that the father of the family should be the wage-earner, while the women of the family remain at home and the children go to school; and as this is not the rule among the very poor, they insist upon making it the rule by legislation."¹

Several chapters in The Child that Toileth Not were devoted to the Capitola Manufacturing Company, describing the positive impact the mill had on the community and surrounding areas. Dawley went into great detail in describing the conditions of the mill workers versus the conditions of the other inhabitants of the area. He spent many days roaming the mountains talking to people, observing and taking pictures. He thoroughly examined the poor mountain farmer from whom the cotton mill labor was recruited. He explained that the thrifty farmers, merchants, lawyers and politicians did not supply the mill.

"The cotton-mill itself was a very small affair (See photograph), and from a manufacturer's standpoint it was hardly worth considering as representative of the great textile industry in the south, but from the standpoint at which I was instructed to study it - its effect upon the employed and the community at large - it presented a most convincing example of what such an industry, however small, may do."²

Dawley said the 1900 U.S. census gave the population of Marshall as 337. He claimed that upon mill start-up (1904) the population doubled and by the time of his investigation (1907-1908) the population was more than 900.

"As the cotton-mill had educated and improved those people whom it had called down from their mountain homes, so had the straggling old county-seat been improved by it. The earnings of the women and children in the mill enabled them to buy goods from the merchants, the merchants bought from the farmers, and the farmers got better prices for what they had to sell. Fathers who had rarely found work around their cabin homes at fifty cents a day, now got from a dollar to a dollar and a half with work all the time they wanted it. They had the money to pay their taxes without any necessity for the tax collector seizing their cow, and they had something upon which to pay the tax as well.

¹Thomas Robinson Dawley, Jr. The Child That Toileth Not. (New York: Gracia Publishing Co., 1912), p. 134.

²Ibid., pp. 128-129.

"If I were a Carnegie or a Rockefeller seeking to improve the conditions of our poor mountain people, I would build them a cotton-mill. I would gather their children in just as soon as they are big enough to doff and spin, and instead of feeding them on homilies and panegyrics, I would pay them a stipend that would buy them more than 'bread and meat.' I would teach them with real money what money brings, and while my cotton-mill might not pay dividends in dollars and cents, it would at least turn out workers capable of making a living for themselves when grown.

"In conclusion, I may add that, although the mill at Marshall was a small one, the town was small and the county poor, it paid a total tax for the year covered by my investigation of five hundred seventeen dollars and seventy-six cents, of which one hundred eighteen dollars forty-eight cents was for public education. Three hundred ninety-nine dollars and twenty cents of the amount was for the county, one hundred thirty-eight dollars and twenty-three cents for the State, and twenty-six dollars and thirty-three cents for the pensions of Confederate soldiers."

"In reviewing these figures I am constrained to wonder how many cows such as the fat man told about as being seized by the tax collector, while the poor man's little children stood around crying for her milk, would it take to pay into the county treasury, and into the State, a like amount.³

For chain of title, see Marshall Milling Company Grist Mill (HAER No. NC-19-A), Part I, Historical Information.

³Ibid., pp. 140-141.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

In contrast with the unique architecture of the grist mill, the cotton mill is in essence a mill environment. The buildings are typical for the period as well as for their functional qualities. The cotton mill is larger than the grist mill. It too is constructed of bonded brick, headered every sixth course.

Approximately twenty years after its original construction in 1904, a third story, which does not exactly match the existing brick, was added to the building. The windows are casement, but their flat-topped arch reflects the architectural influence of the grist mill.

Generally, however, the use of brick and the flattened arch are the only architectural elements that tie the structure together visually. The cotton mill has a functional appearance and reflects little of the Victorian influence pronounced in its neighbor.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the French Broad Electric Membership Corporation, Charles R. Tolley, General Manager, in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in consultation with the Rural Electrification Administration and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer as a mitigative effort in the completion of the Capitola Dam Rehabilitation Project. Documentation was prepared by the J. E. Surrine Company, North Carolina Division, between January 1981 and June 1982, Robin H. Spinks, Project Manager and Historian; Sharon L. Harris, Architect; H. Vance Holt, Civil Engineer; Steve S. Chao, Structural Engineer; Lori I. Cooke, Editor; and Mary Jo Brezny, Photographer.